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SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN AND FERTILITY IN LESOTHO

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***THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN AND FERTILITY
IN LESOTHO***

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1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the 1974 World Population Conference in Bucharest, the improvement of the status of women has received increased attention from scholars and policy makers, not only as a way of attaining other social and economic objective but also, as a desirable goal in itself (Farooq and DeGraff, 1988: 33).

The term "status of women" lacks a clear conceptual definition, however, a number of social demographers have not failed to make claims about how to measure the status of women. The most common measure of women's status is the use of socio-economic indicators such as education, occupation, access to credit, place of residence and so on. However, there's little agreement regarding how and to what degree these conventional indicators of women's status reflect the overall position of women in the household and in the society at large.

The status of women, measured by the socio-economic indicators stated above, has some relationship with demographic variables such as fertility and mortality. Many authors have established how these indicators individually affect the status of women and how each one of them affects the demographic variables. This study will only focus on the relationship between the status of women, socio-economic indicators and fertility.

According to available literature, the two main factors which affect the status of women are education and occupation. It has been stated that lower status means restricted access to education and employment (Obermeyer, 1992: 45). Sadik (1992: 12) pointed out that the status of women can be raised by improving women's education, health and living and working conditions. This was also stated by Strong (1991: 13) who mentioned that women, especially, must have access to

education and to employment outside the home so as to enhance their status. Education acts to increase women's awareness of themselves as individuals and in this way they are able to make independent decisions including those on childbearing, spacing, rearing and breastfeeding. It broadens the roles they play, raises their status, and acts as a powerful influence on fertility and mortality. Therefore, education is a very important factor in influencing the status of women (Khabele and Shale, 1989: 99).

Many studies have indicated that higher education for women can work indirectly to reduce fertility (Sadik, 1992; Safilios-Rothchild, 1982; Oppong and Abu, 1981; Ware, 1981; Piepmeyer and Adkins, 1973) and Mason, 1984). Sadik (1992: 12) showed that poorly educated women in Brazil have an average of 6.5 children each and those with secondary education only 2.5. In Liberia, women who have gone up to secondary school are ten times more likely to take advantage of family planning facilities than those who have not gone to school at all (thereby lowering their fertility).

Fertility has been found to be lower for more educated women because educated women tend to marry late and practice contraception more than those who never went to school. The ones with poor education drop the traditional practices which influence lower fertility such as long periods of breastfeeding and postpartum abstinence though on the other hand they cannot utilize modern methods of reducing fertility.

There has been considerable interest in the question of whether there is a relationship between female employment and fertility. A simple view expressed frequently has been that fertility is associated with women's labour force participation, leading two decades ago to the idea that expansion of female employment would lead to fertility reduction (Oppong and Abu, 1984: 5).

Safilios-Rothchild (1990: 13) in her study in Kenya concluded that the more unpaid family work that women perform, the more likely they are to have low status in society, the earlier they marry, the less likely they are to use contraception, and the more children they have. Conversely the more women work in paid employment, the higher is their status in society, the more they postpone marriage, the more they use contraceptives and the less children they have. This was supported by Ogbuagu (1988: 19) who pointed out that women who participate in paid employment outside the home tend to have lower fertility than those who engage in agriculture and domestic chores.

Potential causal linkages between work and fertility include the increased opportunity cost of women's time upon entering the labour force, the incompatibility of child care and work, exposure to smaller family size norms and different attitudes towards women's roles, greater access to information particularly concerning family planning, delayed marriages and reduction in breastfeeding. Employment and labour force participation, as suggested by Mason (1984: 5), has a positive relationship with women's status hence better employment implies better status and lower levels of fertility.

Other factors which influence the status of women thereby affecting fertility are age at first marriage, age difference between spouses, place of residence and husband's occupation. The early and universal marriage of girls perpetuates their low status in the family and society as well as encouraging early and frequent childbearing (United Nations, 1974: 14). Since early marriage is directly correlated with early pregnancy, women who enter into marriage early are restricted from many types of freedom such as their ability to continue education and this results in lower status of women. Mason (1985: 4) found out that in the developing countries, female age at first marriage usually has an inverse relationship with fertility. This finding is supported by Okojie (1993: 13) who also found out that age at first marriage has a strong negative effect on fertility.

Age at first marriage is affected by the education the woman has received. Women who are more educated tend to marry late because of the length of schooling and increased access to better jobs (Okojie, 1993: 13). Thus, late entry into marriage shortens duration of marriage and the length of exposure to the risk of childbearing thereby lowering fertility. Ware (1981: 89) gave an example of Tunisia where it is argued that legal provisions have actively raised the age at marriage and have thus reduced fertility.

Age difference between spouses has also been found to be an indicator of the status of women. Ware (1981: 92) mentioned that traditionally, husbands were older than their wives, and this was done to ensure that the husband had full control of the household including the wife, had higher power, higher experience and higher status.

Feyisetan and Togunde (1988: 230) mentioned that young wives may find it difficult to interact freely with their much older husbands or challenge the husband's decision. In such a situation the desires of the husband tend to prevail most of the time. They conclude, therefore, that a decrease in the age difference between spouses may lead to a decrease in fertility through a freer level of interaction between spouses.

Place of residence, too, has an impact on the status of women. In urban areas, women tend to be more educated than the ones in rural areas. In addition, there are more employment opportunities and better health care and services in the urban areas. This gives urban women higher status than rural women. It has been stated by Sadik (1992: 12) that raising the status of women by improving their education, health, living and working conditions is far more than a humanitarian consideration, it is essential for slower population growth and for economic and social progress.

Most African countries are predominantly rural and this means that most African women

lack good education, health care and services, living and working conditions indicating, consequently, their low status. Assogba (1990: 11) made it clear that women's status which was traditionally established by their fertility is increasingly determined by such individual components as education and urban experience. He showed that children raised by educated parents employed in the modern sector and living in urban areas, tend to be ascribed higher status because of the modern upbringings they received in childhood.

It is often argued that urban fertility is lower than rural fertility in most African countries. This is due to higher contraceptive use in the urban than in the rural areas, more women spending part of their reproductive periods in school in urban than in rural areas and a larger proportion of women working in modern sectors in the urban than in rural areas. Women in urban areas are therefore likely to have fewer children because of exposure to modern contraception and access to education and employment. Thus, the more women live in urban areas, the higher is their status and the fewer the number of children they are likely to have.

Considering the status of women again, it has been found that women cannot only attain their status from their parents as children but they can also attain their status from their husbands as wives. Okojie (1990: 18) showed that Nigerian women attain public status from their husbands. This may be in view of the employment, education or place of residence of the husband. She also found that husband's income had a positive effect on fertility. Therefore, the higher the status of the husband, the higher the status of women and the lower the fertility.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The intercensal growth rates of Lesotho between the last three censuses, 1966 to 1976 and 1976 to 1986 were found to be 2.3 and 2.6 percent per annum respectively. " What is unfortunate is that the basic economic resources like land, employment opportunities and social services cannot keep up with the demand made on them by the increasing population" (Kukubo, 1989: 110).

The high growth rates resulting from high rates of fertility and declining mortality have serious disadvantages on development especially for a country like Lesotho with poor resources. The disadvantages include government's inability to cope with growing demands for basic necessities like health and education, environmental degradation, poor housing, high rates of unemployment and high rates of crime.

Since the high growth rate in Lesotho has been attributed to high and constant fertility, it would be necessary to lower the fertility rate. Factors which have been found to lower fertility include the increase in contraceptive knowledge and usage, increase in age at first marriage, family life education and incentives which will act to encourage people to have smaller families. In addition, many authors have suggested that an increase in the status of women will also contribute to lower fertility, for example Mason (1984), Oppong (1983) Jeejebhoy (1984), Ware (1981), Faroog (1988), Nash and Safa (1976), Morojele and Mabud (1993) and Vlassoff (1992).

The status of women is characterized by cultural, social and economic factors. In the case of socio-cultural factors in modern Lesotho, Basotho women are still, by civil law, minors; their decisions are subject to be approved or rejected by their husbands. They cannot enter into a contract without the authority of their husbands (Letuka: 1994) and they also experience restricted access to credit. The man is the head of household and makes decisions affecting all members of his

family including the wife. Consequently, male supremacy in Basotho homes compounds the problems of the low status of women.

Taking the economic factors into consideration, it is also observed that married women cannot participate in the labour force unless they obtain such a permission from their husbands. Even though women make up more than 50 per cent of the population, there is only one female for every two males in the economically active population in the modern sector, a majority of women occupy lowly paid positions, poor packages and non-pensionable terms of service.

Though the status of women in Lesotho is low as far as the above factors are concerned, they are still at an advantage than their male counterparts as far as education is concerned; there are more educated women than men though it is only up to high school level. The higher enrollment of females as compared to males is due to the fact that males start schooling late as they look after the animals and they tend to go to the South African mines at an early stage. The number of males which surpasses that of females beyond high school level may be due to higher dropout rates of females resulting from earlier marriage as indicated by the singulate mean age at marriage for females fluctuating between 20 and 21 years compared to the singulate mean age at marriage which fluctuates between 24 and 26 years for males. Thus, in terms of quantity, women are more educated than males but considering the quality of education, men are better than women.

Hence the problem of high and constant fertility in relation to the status of women in Lesotho will be analyzed in this study. Will it increase fertility, keep it constant or lower it?

1.3 RATIONALE

The high rate of population growth has been of great concern to the government of Lesotho. This is because the economy has not been increasing at an equal or higher rate than population and hence, places considerable constraints on social and economic development goals. Since 1974, the government of Lesotho has expressed the desire to reduce its growth rate from 2.6 per cent per annum to 2.0 per cent per annum. It realized that the high growth rate of population is mainly generated by declining death rate and high and constant birth rates. Therefore, in order to reduce the population growth rate, there has to be a reduction in fertility.

Although demographers and policy makers have long been interested in the effect of such processes as urbanization, modernization and economic growth and of such economic characteristics as occupation, income and education, little interest has been expressed in the effect of the status of women on fertility. Therefore, this study will throw some light on the effect of the status of women on fertility in Lesotho.

1.4 OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this study is to establish the relationship between the status of women and fertility behavior in Lesotho. This will be done so as to provide information which could be used by the government to enhance women's status in a way that will have a positive effect on fertility.

The specific objectives are:

- (1) To investigate the relationship between status of Basotho women and fertility in Lesotho

- (2) To examine the status of women in terms of selected socio-economic indicators
- (3) To make recommendations for suitable programs not only for enhancing women's status and thereby influencing fertility, but also for ensuring the socio-economic advancement of Basotho women.

2.0 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 SOURCES AND LIMITATIONS OF DATA

2.1.1 Sources of Data

The study is based on secondary source of data. The main source is the Lesotho Fertility Survey (LFS) which was conducted between April and December 1977.

The main aims of the survey were to serve as a model for future undertakings of the Lesotho government in future research and that the LFS would provide the Lesotho Family Planning Association and the Ministry of Health with information needed for planning their services.

The other aims of the survey included updating and increasing information on levels and patterns of fertility in the country, as well as measuring the effects of factors such as contraception, breastfeeding, male labour force, et cetera, on fertility levels.

The field work for the LFS was carried out in two separate field operations:

- i) A survey of households with a fixed sample size of 20,000 households.

- ii) Individual survey with a sample of 5,000 eligible women.. Eligible women were those who slept in the interviewed household the previous night, were married and aged between 15 and 49.

2.1.2 Limitations of Data

Usually, fertility surveys suffer from various limitations including errors such as sampling and non-sampling errors. Sampling error is a measure of the degree to which the sample estimate differs from the true population value and occurs because a part and not all of the units is covered. Non-sampling errors are due to mistakes made in carrying out field activities such as non-coverage of certain sample areas, non-contact with selected households or respondents or unwillingness of respondents to participate.

The LFS like all other surveys also suffered from the errors and biases mentioned above. The other limitation the LFS had was that it did not include the question on births in the last year but rather births in the last five years.

2.2 METHODS OF ANALYSIS

Simple cross tabulations and descriptive statistics like rates and proportions will be employed in this study. In order to produce a summary index which measures different dimensions of women's status, factor analysis will be used. Multiple regression analysis will also be carried out so as to ascertain the independent effects of each factor of fertility when the impact of other factors is controlled.

3.0 STATUS OF WOMEN

3.1 *THE CONCEPT OF WOMEN'S STATUS*

The meaning of the status of women in demography has remained unclear despite the increased attention it receives. It is a concept with ambiguous operational definition and it is not easy to measure. This concept is often used interchangeably with several other concepts such as "gender inequality", "female autonomy", "sex stratification", "female dependency", "patriarch", "women's rights", and so on.

Different authors define the status of women differently; some use their autonomy or freedom from being controlled by other people, some by their economic dependence on men and others by the amount of prestige accorded to them (Ezeh, 1993: 3).

Widayatun (1991: 5) quoting Safilios-Rothchild, stated that women's status in the society can be conceptualized on two levels; status within the household and status in the society. Status in the society could be explained by either the relationship between women and men (inter-gender) or by the relationship between women and other women (intra-gender), depending on the interest of the researcher. The status within the household could just be explained by the woman's status in relation to herself and other members of the household, that is, the husband and the in-laws.

Okojie (1993: 3), similarly, stated that the status of women is distinguished by the public status and the private status, where the public status refers to the society's evaluation of women relative to men and the private status refers to women's power and influence at the household level relative to male members, especially their husbands.

Mason (1984: 6), on the other hand, indicated that some authors focus on women's prestige, that is, the respect that is accorded to women by virtue of their gender, some focus on women's power or freedom from control by others especially within the household, while others focus on women's control of resources, either material or non-material (Mason, 1984: 6).

Farooq and De Graff (1988: 33) agreed that women's status is a multi-faceted concept, incorporating such diverse elements as opportunities for education, access to productive assets and credit, participation in employment outside the household, decision making authority within the family and the society, health and nutrition status, marriage and divorce practices, perception by self and the society. As such, they concluded, it is difficult to define a single empirical component of women's status).

The definition of the status of women which will be employed in this study is the one defined at the 1974 population conference. The status of women was defined as "the conjunction of positions a woman occupies at anyone point in time, as a worker, as a student, wife, mother or whatever, and of rights and duties she is expected to exercise in her active role as an occupant of these positions "(United Nations: 1974: 7).

This is an indication that aspects of women's status are largely dependent of each other so that no particular variable can predict how women fare on one or other aspect. It is therefore difficult to arrive at definitions of high or low status using individual variables.

In measuring the status of women, this study will analyze the status of women vis-à-vis other women. The women under study are those ever married and aged between 15 and 49 inclusive. The study focuses on this age group because these are the women in the childbearing age in which the status of women is closely related to fertility. The socio-economic indicators which

will be used are education, occupation before and since marriage, pattern of work, place of work since marriage, type of place of residence, age difference between spouses, age at first marriage, husband's education, childhood place of residence, and religion.

3.2 COMPOSITE STATUS INDEX

Researchers studying the effects of the status of women on fertility have focused on the relationships between individual indicators and the dependent variables. This could, probably, have been due to lack of a common theoretical and methodological under-pinning in considering the status of women as an independent variable.

An attempt, therefore, is made in this study to use a technique for studying women's status using the selected variables and grouping women into status categories. This will be achieved by the use of factor analysis.

Factor analysis is a statistical technique used to identify a relatively small number of factors that can be used to represent relationships among sets of many interrelated variables. The mathematical model for factor analysis appears somewhat similar to a multiple regression equation. Each variable is expressed as a linear combination of factors which are not actually observed.

Factor analysis was carried out by the use of SPSS PC default. The procedure was applied to all women interviewed. Three factors (namely factor 1, factor 2 and factor 3) were identified from the selected socio-economic variables and scores were assigned for each woman based on the three factors by regression method.

It was found that factor 1 is highly loaded with occupation since marriage, work status since marriage, place of work since marriage and the pattern of work; the place of work was found to have the highest loading. Factor 2 is highly loaded with age at first marriage, occupation before marriage, level of education, husband's education and occupation and the age difference between spouses. The level of education and work status before marriage had the highest loading. The third factor, factor 3 was highly loaded with age of respondents, region of residence, type of place of residence, religion and childhood place of residence. The region of residence was found to have the highest loading (see Appendix 3.2).

For identifying the 3 factors with the aspects of socio-economic status of the women identifying them, factor 1 can be referred to as 'economic status', factor 2 as 'pre-marital and husband's characteristics' and factor 3 as 'social status'.

The socio-economic status of women in Lesotho may therefore be considered a function of economic status, pre-marital and husband's characteristics and social status. The identification of these 3 factors will thus enable each woman to be assigned a score based on these factors by regression method.

The total scores for the women were found to range from -4.44 to 0.76 from the valid number of women which was 3,151. Factor analysis deletes missing cases from various variables so that only those cases for which values on all socio-economic variables are valid are included.

Women with scores equal or less than 0.56 were classified as 'low status' and those with scores above 0.56 as high status and the distribution was as follows:

Table 3.1: Percentage Distribution of Women By Status			
Scores	Status	Number of women	Percentage
Total Score less or equal to 0.56	Low	2,535	80.5
Total Score more than 0.56	High	616	19.5
Total		3,151	100.0

From Table 3.1 it is apparent that the majority of ever married women in Lesotho have low status; only about 20 per cent have a high status. This is due to, among other things, lack of occupation (before and after marriage), early marriage, rural residence and lack of higher education.

3.3 THREE FACTORS OF WOMEN'S STATUS

The composite socio-economic status of women has been considered a function of three factors. Each woman has a score in each factor, therefore in this case also, the percentage distribution of women by these factors and the status categories can be established. This is shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Percentage distribution of status categories and the three factors of women's status

Status Category	Three Factors of Women's Status		
	1	2	3
Low	70.5	58.2	62.4
High	29.5	41.2	37.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

In agreement with the composite status, each of the three factors has a higher percentage of women in the low status category. The margin in the status categories is wider for factor 1 than factor 3 and lastly factor 2. This may be due to the fact that factor 1 has been affected by a large number of women who never worked since marriage while factor 3 has been affected by a higher percentage of women living in the rural areas. A smaller disparity is observed for factor 2 because

of a balance between the low occupational status of the husband and education of the woman.

Therefore, it could be concluded that women in Lesotho, have low status as has been observed from the three factors of women's status and the composite socio-economic status women. However, having identified the low status of women in Lesotho the relationship between the status of women (low and high) and fertility will be established in the next chapter.

4.0 SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN AND FERTILITY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature reviewed earlier in this study showed that the status of women is an important factor in fertility. It was shown that the lower the status of women the higher the fertility. The status of women in this study is as measured by selected socio-economic variables such as education, occupation, residence and age at first marriage. As such women were classified into two status categories, high and low, using factor analysis. The result of the analysis showed that the majority of Basotho women (80.5 percent) fall under the low status category. Those in the low status category were those whose scores were 0.56 and less while those with high status were those with scores more than 0.56.

With the reviewed literature that the low status of women keeps fertility at high levels, it is the main objective of this study to find out whether such a relationship of fertility and women's status holds in Lesotho.

4.2 THE THREE FACTORS OF WOMEN'S STATUS AND FERTILITY

The composite socio-economic status of women had been found to be a function of three factors which were extracted by the principal component method. The three factors were composed of some selected socio-economic indicators of women's status. Factor 1, named the economic status, was loaded with occupation and place of work since marriage and the pattern of work. Factor 2, the pre-marital and husband's characteristics, was loaded with age at first marriage, occupation before marriage, level of education, age difference between spouses and husband's education and occupation. The last factor, Factor 3, named the social status, was highly loaded with age of the respondents, religion and region, type and childhood place of residence.

Each factor will be related to fertility in order to have a better and clear understanding of the relationship between fertility and the status of women. The bivariate distribution of women's status and fertility is shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Mean Number of Children Ever Born by Factors of Women's Status
Status Categories*

Factors	Low	High
1	3.8056	1.3631
2	3.4958	2.5081
3	4.0049	1.8500

*The Status categories in this case were subdivided into low and high status using the mode for each factor as a cut-off point between the two categories.

Table 4.1 shows that for all the factors, women in the low status category have the highest mean number of children ever born. The difference is quite obvious in factor 1 where women in the low status category have up to almost three times as many children as those in the high status category. In factor 3, women who are in the low status category have as many as two children more than those in the high status category.

Factor 1 shows the highest difference in the mean number of children ever born between the two status categories. This could be due to the fact that the majority of women in the low status category were not participating in the labour force. It has been shown in the earlier analysis that the lower the participation of women in the labour force, the earlier they marry, the less likely they are to use contraception and this leads to high fertility.

Factor 3 also shows some considerable disparity between the mean number of children ever born by status. This, too, could be explained by the fact that the majority of women in the low status category live in the rural areas and were raised in the country side as children. Rural residence is disadvantaged in many ways, for example, by low contraceptive usage and lack of employment in modern sectors.

In factor 2 there is not much disparity observed between fertility and the two status categories. This could be due to a combination of many reasons including the low labour force participation of women since marriage and the effect of migrant labour.

Having examined the bivariate analysis of women's status using the three factors and the mean number of children ever born, a multiple regression model is applied to the relationship between these variables and fertility. This is done so as to ascertain the independent effects of each factor on fertility when the impact of other factors is controlled. The three factors would be regarded as the independent variables and the number of children ever born as the dependent variable. The three factors are considered as continuous variables and the results are shown in

Table 4.2 Multiple Regression Analysis of Children Ever Born by 3 Factors of Socio-economic Status of Women

Factors	Beta Coefficients Significance	
Factor 1	-.158455	.0000
Factor 2	-.180309	.0000
Factor 3	-.344499	.0000
Adjusted R-Squared	=	0.17551
F	=	244.52025
Significant F	=	0.0000

It is observed from Table 4.2 that the adjusted R-Square which measures the proportion of the variance explained by all variables is about 18 percent, meaning that the three factors of the socio-economic status of women explain 18 percent of the variation in the number of children ever born. The remaining 82 percent could be explained by other factors which were not included in the model such as the proximate determinants of fertility.

The value of the beta coefficients are about 16 percent, 18 percent and 34 percent for factor 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Of the 18 percent variation of fertility explained by all the factors, about 68 percent of children ever born will be reduced by the three factors of which 50.4 percent is due of factor 3, 26.3 percent to factor 2 and 23.2 percent to factor 1. In essence, a larger percentage is contributed by factor 3. It has been cited earlier that the status that a woman acquires in childhood and before marriage has a very significant impact on the number of children she will bear. A high status before marriage plus improved status after marriage will tend to reduce significantly the number of children a woman will bear.

In the above analysis of the three factors of women's and status fertility using both the bivariate and multiple regression it has been observed that the status of women has a negative effect on fertility.

4.3 THE COMPOSITE STATUS OF WOMEN AND FERTILITY

Table 4.3 shows the mean number of children ever born by the composite status of women. This composite status of women is a function of the three factors which have just been discussed.

Table 4.3 Mean Number of Children Ever Born (CEB) by Status of Women

Status of Women	Number of CEB	Number of Women	Mean Number of CEB
Low	9,035	2,535	3.5641
High	725	616	1.1769
Total	9,760	3,151	3.0974

It is observed from Table 4.3 that the results conform with what other studies have shown as far as the relationship between fertility and the status of women is concerned.

The mean number of children ever born is 1.18 and 3.56 for women in high and low status categories respectively. This shows that women in the low status category on average, bear more than three times as many children as those borne by women in the high status category. The high fertility of women in the low status category has been attributed to, among other things, lack of education, wider spousal difference (lack of power in decision making), early marriage and rural residence.

Therefore, the statement made earlier that the higher the status of women the lower the fertility, has been ascertained in the case of Lesotho where it has been found that women in the low status category have more children than those in the high status category.

This has important implications for policy makers. In order to reduce the high growth rate which has been attributed to high fertility rates, the status of women in Lesotho could be enhanced so as to reduce fertility thereby lowering the population growth rate to the desired level.

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study was to establish the relationship between the status of women and fertility behavior in Lesotho. The source of the data which was used was the 1977 Lesotho Fertility Survey. Information on children ever born and background characteristics of women such as age, education, region and type of place of residence, age at first marriage, age difference between spouses, religion and occupation formed the basis for this study.

These background characteristics have been used as indicators of women's status which has been defined as "the conjunction of positions a woman occupies at anyone point in time, as a worker, as a student, wife, mother or whatever and of rights and duties she is expected to exercise in her active role as an occupant of these positions". In order to find this conjunction of positions, factor analysis was employed and resulted in three factors of women's status. The three factors were identified as economic status, pre-marital and husband's characteristics and social status. Each woman was assigned a score in each factor and the overall results showed that, in all the three factors, more than half of the women had low status. The composite status of women, a function of the three factors, showed that about 80 per cent of Basotho women fall in the low status category.

The bivariate analysis of the three factors of women's status and fertility showed that in all factors, women in the low status categories had higher mean number of children ever born. The regression analysis indicated that all factors have a negative effect on fertility and the third factor, social status, is the most significant factor in fertility reduction. On the composite status of women, it was found out that the lower the status of women, the higher the rate of fertility.

It can thus be concluded from the findings above that the status of women is a very important factor in fertility analysis. With an enhanced status of women, fertility levels can be reduced thereby lowering the population growth rate of Lesotho which has been increasing more than the rate of economic growth. The enhanced status of women will not only serve to reduce fertility but also to improve the socio-economic advancement of Basotho women, families and the population in general.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It has been observed that the high status of women is an important variable in reducing fertility in Lesotho. It is therefore very important to improve the status of women so that desired population growth rates can be reached. In view of this, the following recommendations are made for enhancing the status of women:

1. Women must have access to higher education and vocational training without which efforts to eliminate their early marriage are likely to meet with failure.
2. National development plans and programmes should include the promotion of opportunities for the employment of women in all existing fields and where appropriate, the formation of new industries and services to encourage women to enter the labour force and overcome prejudices against their participation.
3. Legislation setting a minimum age at marriage for both males and females, (of not less than 18 years for females), requiring the registration of all marriages, and ensuring that marriages are contracted only with the free and full consent of the

intending spouses should be enacted and enforced by the government.

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APPENDIX 3.1

List of Variables Used in Factor Analysis

Code	Variables
V109	Age at first marriage
V010	Age in completed years
V701	Region of residence
V708	Occupation before marriage
V709	Work status before marriage
V802	Husband's education
V702	Type of place of residence
V703	Childhood place of residence
V704	Level of education
V706	Religion
V710	Occupation since marriage
V711	Work status since marriage
V712	Place of work since marriage
V713	Pattern of work
V804	Husband's occupation
Aged	Age difference between spouses

APPENDIX 3.2

Rotated* Factor Matrix

Code	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
V109	-.01893	.43930	-.24548
V010	-.25394	-.17349	-.55833
V701	.02145	-.08313	.69978
V708	-.11053	.54744	-.07982
V709	.13499	.64843	-.00027
V802	-.07683	.52008	.20324
V702	-.01620	-.13248	.57991
V703	.00749	.00396	-.07269
V704	-.4343	.64839	.27353
V706	-.01524	-.06815	-.17572
V710	-.54462	.06260	-.62860
V711	.88332	-.04113	-.02993
V712	.92224	.01869	-.00337
V713	.91225	-.21499	.00040
V804	-.03992	.12966	-.11037
Aged	-.05378	-.23164	.00615

*Rotation helps to make factors more interpretable

Note: The highest absolute value of each variable in each factor indicates the factor to which the variable falls. For example, V109 under factor 2 since the highest value falls in factor 2.



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